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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 000430

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SUBJECT: MENON QUIETLY TAKING GAMBARI MESSAGE TO BURMA

REF: NEW DELHI 353

Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Ministry of Under Secretary for Burma Pratibha Parkar told Poloff that UN Special Envoy for Burma Ibrahim Gambari asked the Government of India (GOI) for support during his recent visit to India. Gambari asked the GOI to use its influence to encourage the Burmese to allow him to visit Burma sooner than late April 2008, adding that he was willing to meet with them in a third country, Parkar stated. She indicated that Foreign Secretary Menon, currently in Rangoon, would reinforce this message to the Burmese, and that the Indians had already asked Burma to show more flexibility. Parkar confirmed that Menon would discuss the Sittwe Port development deal while in Burma. Though Indian officials indicate that the GOI will step up its rhetoric against the Burmese junta, it has yet to do so visibly. END SUMMARY.

India Promises to Change Rhetoric on Burma...

12. (C) MEA Under Secretary for Burma Pratibha Parkar told Poloff February 8 that UN Special Envoy for Burma Ibrahim Gambari had asked Foreign Secretary Menon and External Affairs Minister Mukherjee to intervene on his behalf with the Burmese. During Gambari's late January visit to India, he expressed his disappointment with the Burmese for not allowing him to visit Burma until late April, asking the GOI for its support, according to Parkar. Gambari indicated that he was willing to meet the Burmese junta in a third country if necessary, Parkar reported, but neither party had suggested India as a meeting location. Gambari underlined his unhappiness with the Burmese government and the Constitutional Review Commission to Indian officials, Parkar imparted. Adding that Gambari had asked the GOI to take up these matters with the Burmese, Parkar stated that the GOI had already done so when the Burmese foreign minister visited in early January 2008. As to Burma's unwillingness to meet earlier with Gambari, Parkar said Burma's Deputy Foreign Minister had explained in early December 2007 that the Burmese had "other engagements" that would keep the government otherwise occupied until late April 2008. Asked if Menon would reiterate Gambari's message during his current visit to Rangoon, Parkar replied that he would, and that the Indians had already indicated to the Burmese that they should show some flexibility. Poloff remarked that an end of April meeting for Gambari seemed arbitrarily distant, adding that he hoped the GOI would be willing to push hard for an earlier

date. The Burmese had made many unkept promises since October 2007, he emphasized.

...But Leaves Out the Welcome Mat

13. (C) Parkar confirmed that Menon would raise the Sittwe Port development deal while in Burma, thereby indicating that the Foreign Secretary had business on his agenda in addition to conveying Gambari's message. Parkar would not confirm reports that General Maung Aye is scheduled to visit in April, maintaining that no Burmese officials were formally slated to visit India. She acknowledged that an official of the Ministry of Communication, Post and Telegraph was visiting Mumbai next week, but contended that he was coming at the invitation of a semi-private seminar. Raising a press report that the GOI had told Gambari it was "committed to putting diplomatic boots on the ground," Poloff inquired whether India was planning on sending more diplomats to Burma. Parkar responded that no new positions were being added to the Rangoon mission as far as she knew.

India Continues Business As Usual with Burma Despite Promises to Gambari

14. (C) Comment: Despite promises of support the GOI made to Gambari late last month (reftel), Parkar provided no indication that India intended to apply any more pressure on the junta other than the private lobbying it already claimed. That's not to say Menon won't be able to help the UN good offices mission; however, it appears as though the GOI continues with business as usual on Burma. End comment.

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